

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

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Claim 1. A method of playing a gaming device in which each slot game has a plurality of reels, a plurality of symbols associated with each reel and a plurality of pay lines comprising:

a) providing a gaming machine having at least a first slot game and second slot game thereon;

b) configuring the first slot game to operate independently of the second slot game with regard to the activation of the slot reels, the display of the symbols on each reel and the determination of an outcome on each pay line; and

c) providing a common pool of credits from which each slot game uses credits to make wagers and to which each slot game accrues awards from any winning occurrences on the slot game.

Claim 2. The method of claim 1 including the steps of:

a) using a separate input means to make a wager on each slot game;

b) using a separate means to activate the start of each slot game;

c) using a separate means to allow a player to view

an explanation of the operation, rules and payouts for each game;

d) providing a separate area on a display screen of the gaming machine to allow the player view the wager made, the credits accrued and other information pertinent to the operation of each game;

e) using a common control means to allow the player to receive a payout of any amount of accrued credits.

Claim 3. The method of Claim 1 including the step of providing that each game is the same game in every aspect, including having the same set of rules, symbols, pay lines, wagers, music, artwork and random number generator.

Claim 4. The method of Claim 1 including the step of providing that each game is a different game in one or more aspects, including having a different set of rules, symbols, pay lines, wagers, music, artwork or random number generator.

Claim 5. The method of Claim 1 including the step of providing that each of the slot games on the gaming machine is selected by a manufacturer of the gaming machine.

Claim 6. The method of Claim 1 including the step of providing that each of the slot games on the gaming machine is selected by a gaming establishment who is acquiring the gaming machine.

Claim 7. The method of Claim 1 including the step of providing that each of the slot games on the gaming machine is selected by the player of the gaming machine from a menu of available games provided on the gaming machine.

Claim 8. The method of Claim 1 including the steps of:

a) providing the gaming machine with a main screen which displays each slot game;

b) activating at least one bonus feature during the play of a slot game if at least one predetermined result occurs during the play of the slot game; and

c) providing that each bonus feature on the first game operates independently of any outcome achieved during the play of the second game on the same machine.

Claim 9. The method of Claim 2 including the steps of:

a) providing the gaming machine with a main screen which displays each slot game;

b) activating at least one bonus feature during the

play of a slot game if at least one predetermined result occurs during the play of the slot game; and

c) providing that each bonus feature on the first game operates in conjunction with any outcome achieved during the play of the second game on the same machine.

Claim 10. The method of Claim 1 including the step of providing that each slot game includes:

a) randomly selecting and displaying one or more pay lines of at least three symbols;

b) the player making a first wager on a first pay line, a second wager on a second pay line and additional wagers on any subsequent pay lines by drawing from the common pool of credits;

c) crediting to the common pool of credits a predetermined amount based on the amount of the first wager if the resulting symbols of the first pay line comprise a predetermined winning combination;

d) crediting to the common pool of credits a predetermined amount based on the amount of the second wager if the resulting symbols of the second pay line comprise a predetermined winning combination; and

e) crediting to the common pool of credits a predetermined amount based on the amount of any subsequent

wagers if the resulting symbols on any of the subsequent pay lines comprise a predetermined winning combination.

Claim 11. The method of Claim 1 including the step of providing each slot game with a bonus feature which is activated if at least one predetermined symbol appears anywhere on the slot game screen display.

Claim 12. The method of Claim 1 including the step of providing each slot game with a bonus feature which is activated randomly.

Claim 13. The method of Claim 1 including the step of providing each slot game with a bonus feature which is activated according to a predetermined schedule.

Claim 14. The method of Claim 1 including the step of providing each slot game with a bonus feature which is activated as a result of a decision made by the player.

Claim 15. The method of Claim 1 including the step of providing each slot game with a bonus feature which is activated as a result of an action by the player.

Claim 16. The method of Claim 11 in which, if the bonus feature activated, then an amount of bonus credits is awarded based on the total amount wagered by the player.

Claim 17. The method of Claim 16 in which the bonus amount is determined by multiplying the total amount wagered by a random number within a predetermined range of numbers.

Claim 18. The method of Claim 16 in which the bonus amount is determined by multiplying the total amount wagered by any calculation that results in an average value that can be utilized to control the overall average payout amount of the gaming machine.

Claim 19. The method of Claim 1 including the step of providing each slot game with a bonus screen feature which is activated if at least one predetermined symbol appears on an active pay line on the slot game screen display.

Claim 20. The method of Claim 19 in which the bonus screen feature is selected randomly from a plurality of possible bonus screens.

Claim 21. The method of Claim 19 in which the bonus screen

feature comprises the steps of:

a) displaying at least two objects on a bonus screen;

b) the player continuing to select a bonus screen object which reveals an award to the player until the player selects a bonus screen object that causes the bonus screen feature to end; and

c) accruing to the common pool of credits the total accumulated amount of the award achieved by the player during the play of the bonus screen feature.

Claim 22. The method of Claim 21 in which the bonus screen award includes a special feature award in which the player receives an award based on the total amount wagered by the player.

Claim 23. The method of Claim 22 in which the special feature award is a multiplier selected randomly from a group of possible multiplier numbers.

Claim 24. The method of Claim 22 in which the special feature award is an amount calculated to result in an average value that can be utilized to control the overall average payout of the gaming machine.

Claim 25. A gaming machine comprising:

a) a first slot game having a plurality of reels, a plurality of symbols associated with each reel and a plurality of pay lines;

b) a second slot game having a plurality of reels, a plurality of symbols associated with each reel and a plurality of pay lines;

c) a main video display screen which displays both the first slot game and the second slot game;

d) means for operating the first slot game independently of the second slot game with regard to the activation of the slot reels, the display of the symbols on each reel and the determination of an outcome on each pay line; and

e) a common credits meter from which both the first slot game and the second slot game uses credits to make wagers and to which both the first slot game and the second slot game accrues awards from any winning occurrences on either the first slot game or the second slot game.

Claim 26. The apparatus of claim 25 including:

a) a first input means for making a wager on the first slot game and a second, separate input means to make a wager on the second slot game;

b) a first means for activating the start of the first slot game and a second, separate means for activating the start of the second slot game;

c) a first means for allowing a player to view an explanation of the operation, rules and payouts for the first game and a second, separate means for allowing a player to view an explanation of the operation, rules and payouts for the second slot game;

d) a first area on the video display screen view for allowing a player to view the wager made, the credits accrued and other information pertinent to the operation of the first slot game and a second, separate area on the video display screen for allowing a player to view the wager made, the credits accrued and other information pertinent to the operation of the second slot game; and

e) a means for allowing the player to receive a payout of any amount of accrued credits as shown on the common credits meter.

Claim 27. The apparatus of Claim 25 including a bonus screen feature which is displayed on the video screen display and is activated if at least one predetermined symbol appears on an active pay line on either the first slot game or the second slot game.